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7 Attorneys for Plaintiff

8 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**

9 **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

10 THERESA BROOKE, a married woman
11 dealing with her sole and separate claim,

12 Plaintiff,

13 vs.

14 SAPPHIRE INVESTMENTS LLC, a
15 California limited liability company,

16 Defendant.

Case No:

VERIFIED COMPLAINT

(JURY TRIAL DEMANDED)

17 Plaintiff Theresa Marie Brooke alleges:

18 **PARTIES**

19 1. Plaintiff Theresa Brooke is a married woman. Plaintiff is legally disabled,
20 and is therefore a member of a protected class under the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12102(2),
21 the regulations implementing the ADA set forth at 28 CFR §§ 36.101 et seq., the
22 California Unruh Civil Rights Act. Plaintiff ambulates with the aid of a wheelchair due
23 to the loss of a leg.

24 2. Defendant, Sapphire Investments LLC, owns and/or operates and does
25 business as the hotel Best Western Plus Commerce Hotel located at 7272 East Gage
26 Avenue, Commerce, California 90040. Defendant's hotel is a public accommodation
27 pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12181(7)(A), which offers public lodging services. On
28 information and belief, Defendant's hotel was built or renovated after March 15, 2012.

JURISDICTION

3. Jurisdiction in this Court is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 42 U.S.C. § 12188.

4. Plaintiff's claims asserted herein arose in this judicial district and Defendant does substantial business in this judicial district.

5. Venue in this judicial district is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c) in that this is the judicial district in which a substantial part of the acts and omissions giving rise to the claims occurred.

6. Pursuant to *Arroyo v. Rosas*, supplemental jurisdiction is appropriate over Plaintiff's Unruh claim. On a case-specific analysis, there are no compelling reasons to decline jurisdiction.

ALLEGATIONS

7. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant's hotel does not have a compliant access aisle at the passenger loading zone adjacent to the hotel lobby in violation of Section 503 of the 2010 Standards. An access aisle has specific requirements: It must be 60 inches wide and at least 20 feet long, it must have an accessible route adjoining it, and it cannot be within a vehicular way. Section 503.3.

8. Plaintiff formerly worked in the hospitality industry and her husband works in the travel industry. She and her husband are avid travelers to California for purposes of leisure travel and to "test" whether various hotels comply with disability access laws. Testing is encouraged by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

9. Plaintiff and her husband traveled to the Los Angeles area in early July of this year. She and her husband anticipate returning several times in the next few months for required hearings, depositions and further testing. For example, she has flight plans for a return in August and intends on making a reservation to lodge at this hotel in the event Defendant actually fixes the barrier at issue.

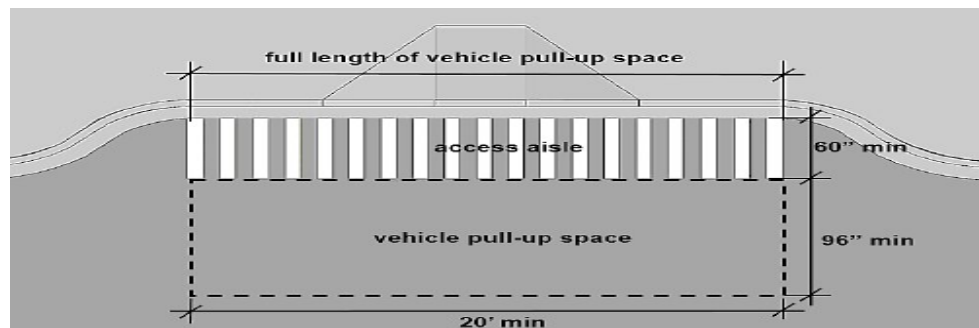
10. During this trip, Plaintiff personally visited Defendant's hotel. Defendant's hotel has a passenger loading zone because pickup and dropoff occurs

there and it is located directly outside of the lobby entrance. There are also design features showing an intent for utilization as a passenger loading zone. For example, there is a *porte cochere*, which by definition is a design feature for passenger loading zones.

11. While at Defendant's hotel, she discovered that Defendant's hotel has a barrier to entry to the lobby, which is that the passenger loading zone does not have an access aisle compliant with Section 503.3. The requirement of an access aisle at a passenger loading zone relates to Plaintiff's disability of not having one leg and being forced to use a wheelchair because access aisles are required so persons in a wheelchair can maneuver without threat of danger from other vehicles and without other encumbrances blocking their pathway. The lobby, therefore, is inaccessible to Plaintiff by way of the passenger loading zone because there is no access aisle.

12. Plaintiff gained actual and personal knowledge of a barrier while visiting Defendant's hotel (no access aisle at passenger loading zone), and as a result, she was deterred from entering the hotel. She will only return to the hotel if Defendant puts the required access aisle into place. Visiting otherwise would be futile because the lack of the access aisle represents a barrier to entering the lobby.

13. An illustration of a correct access aisle is provided below:



14. Defendant's hotel passenger loading zone does not have the access aisle depicted in the illustration above.

1 15. It is readily achievable to modify the hotel to provide an access aisle.
2 Provision of an access aisle is extremely inexpensive; it involves painting and
3 measuring tools.

4 16. Without injunctive relief, Plaintiff and others will continue to be unable to
5 independently use Defendant's hotel in violation of her rights under the ADA.

6 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

7 17. Plaintiff incorporates all allegations heretofore set forth.

8 18. Defendant has discriminated against Plaintiff and others in that it has
9 failed to make its public lodging services fully accessible to, and independently usable
10 by, individuals who are disabled in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a) and §
11 12182(b)(2)(iv) and the 2010 Standards, as described above.

12 19. Defendant has discriminated against Plaintiff in that it has failed to
13 remove architectural barriers to make its lodging services fully accessible to, and
14 independently usable by individuals who are disabled in violation of 42 U.S.C.
15 §12182(b)(A)(iv) and the 2010 Standards, as described above. Compliance with the
16 2010 Standards would neither fundamentally alter the nature of Defendant's lodging
17 services nor result in an undue burden to Defendant.

18 20. In violation of the 2010 Standards, Defendant's hotel passenger loading
19 zone does not have a disability access aisle compliant with Section 503.3 of the
20 Standards.

21 21. Compliance with 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv) and the 2010 Standards,
22 as described above, is readily achievable by the Defendant. *Id.* Readily achievable
23 means that providing access is easily accomplishable without significant difficulty or
24 expense.

25 22. Defendant's conduct is ongoing, and Plaintiff invokes her statutory right
26 to declaratory and injunctive relief, as well as costs and attorneys' fees.

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- 2 b. Permanent injunction pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188(a)(2) and 28 CFR §
- 3 36.504(a) which directs Defendant to take all steps necessary to bring its
- 4 passenger loading zone into full compliance with the requirements set
- 5 forth in the ADA;
- 6 c. Payment of costs and attorney's fees;
- 7 d. Damages in the amount of \$4,000.00; and
- 8 e. Provision of whatever other relief the Court deems just, equitable and
- 9 appropriate.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

10 Plaintiff hereby demands a jury trial on issues triable by a jury.

11 RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 5th day of July, 2022.

12

13 /s/ P. Kristofer Strojnik

14 P. Kristofer Strojnik (242728)

15 Attorneys for Plaintiff

16 **VERIFICATION**

17 I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

18 DATED this 5th day of July, 2022.

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24 Theresa Marie Brooke

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